



Intensive Parenting Attitudes in Sweden: An Exception or a Global Pattern?

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Abstract

Objective: To examine predominant profiles of intensive parenting attitudes in Sweden.

Background: Attitudes promoting “intensive parenting” are prevalent in many countries and are associated with mothering and socioeconomic and racial/ethnic privilege. Are intensive parenting attitudes widespread in Sweden, a lower-inequality country that has historically intervened to shift burdens off parents and encourage gender equality?

Method: Using the 2021 Generations and Gender Survey (N = 7907), descriptive and latent class analyses identified predominant patterns of intensive parenting attitudes among Swedes and their sociodemographic predictors.

Results: Weak to moderate average population-level agreement with measures of intensive parenting attitudes obscured considerable variability across individuals. About half of respondents, disproportionately younger, foreign-born, and female, belonged to latent classes that strongly or moderately subscribed to intensive parenting attitudes. Another third of the sample belonged to a discordant latent class dominated by older, Swedish-born, and class-advantaged respondents that espoused some aspects of intensive parenting attitudes but not others, in a distinct pattern not yet identified in other contexts.

Conclusion: Results for respondents from socioeconomically, ethnically, and gender-advantaged backgrounds supported the “Swedish exceptionalism” hypothesis, whereas less advantaged disproportionately subscribed to internationally prevalent intensive parenting attitudes.

Implications: This dissonance in predominant parenting attitudes between more and less advantaged groups of Swedes may have interesting implications for future norms and policies.

Keywords: intensive parenting, intensive mothering, parenthood, Sweden, latent class analysis



Introduction

Intensive parenting attitudes and behaviors have become prevalent in many wealthy countries. Characterized as “child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, and financially expensive” (Hays, 1996, p. 8), intensive parenting is intended to ensure children’s future socioeconomic success in contexts characterized by uncertainty and inequalities. The related middle-class parenting style of “concerted cultivation” (Lareau 2003) involves extensive verbal interaction and provision of enrichment opportunities, in which children learn interactional styles that mesh well with educational institutions (Calarco, 2018). Both qualitative and quantitative research on intensive parenting have their origins in the United States (Hays, 1996; Liss et al., 2013), but scholarship has demonstrated the presence of intensive parenting attitudes in other wealthy countries (e.g., Gauthier et al., 2021; Klimor Maman et al., 2023). Both countries’ policies and their normative contexts are crucial for shaping people’s attitudes and behaviors around parenting (Neyer & Andersson, 2008).

Sweden, in which intensive parenting attitudes have not previously been measured, is an outlier both in terms of policies that support childrearing, gender-egalitarian norms, and economic equality and in terms of public trust in institutions. These factors may reduce the attractiveness of intensive parenting attitudes, which place responsibility on individual parents—particularly mothers—and stress future insecurities for children. At the same time, Sweden is experiencing a shrinking social safety net and rising inequalities (OECD, 2015).

In this study, we investigated the potential spread of intensive parenting attitudes to Sweden, contrasting a “Swedish exceptionalism hypothesis,” which expected intensive parenting not to have gained an extensive foothold, with an “international development hypothesis,” which expected intensive parenting to have become widespread in wealthy countries including Sweden. We moved beyond population-level averages to consider profiles of intensive parenting attitudes within

individuals and across domains. We asked what the predominant profiles of intensive parenting attitudes and their prevalence and sociodemographic composition were in a nationally representative sample of Swedish adults. Our results reveal a complex landscape in which a distinct, discordant profile including selected intensive parenting attitudes but not others among older, privileged groups appears to be bumping up against more comprehensive intensive parenting attitudes among younger, female, and foreign-born Swedes.

BACKGROUND

Intensive Parenting

Intensive parenting is considered the dominant parenting paradigm in the contemporary US (Damaske, 2013). Research has also documented its prevalence in other wealthy countries (Gauthier et al., 2021; Loyal et al., 2017). Rooted in neoliberal trends stressing personal responsibility (LeBesco, 2011), intensive parenting attitudes expect parents—particularly mothers—to expend abundant resources in terms of time, money, and emotional investment. Fostering socioeconomic achievement to ensure children’s success in a future perceived to be uncertain and unequal has been considered the predominant focus. But as notions of ideal parenting have become more holistic, emphasizing health, emotional security, and resilience, pressures have increased on parents to retain a focus on academic achievement while expanding their efforts to encompass these additional dimensions (Göransson, 2023; Mollborn et al., 2021).

Evidence from time use data suggests that intensive parenting practices are becoming more widespread. Across a variety of wealthy countries, mothers and fathers are spending more time caring for children than in past decades (Dotti Sani & Treas, 2016). US data show that parents have simultaneously increased their spending on childrearing (Kornrich & Furstenberg, 2013).

Unsurprisingly, class-based achievement gaps have concomitantly widened (Reardon, 2018). More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic intensified many pressures on parents in many contexts but also transformed family and work life, which could result in future changes to these pressures (Cummins & Brannon, 2022; Montazer et al., 2022).

Evidence on the effects of intensive parenting is sparser but suggests that it is often not positive. Rizzo and colleagues (2013) found that mothers' beliefs that parenthood is challenging predicted higher depression and stress. Swedish mothers and fathers who shoulder the double burden of earning as much or more than their partner and taking as much parental leave or more are more likely to take sick leave (Lidwall & Voss, 2020). And although intensive parenting is expected to benefit children's development, findings from Schiffrin and colleagues (2015) do not support this notion: As expected, adherence to the challenging and stimulation dimensions of intensive parenting predicted children's enrollment in structured activities through the causal pathway of increased "anticipatory problem solving" in parenting. But these enrichment activities had few developmental effects on children.

Gender and socioeconomic status have long been considered especially important for understanding intensive parenting—indeed, Hays's (1996) original formulation was "intensive mothering." Evidence supports the idea that intensive parenting can be extended to fathers but that its pressures are particularly salient for women. On one hand, mothers and fathers are evaluated similarly positively when engaging in intensive parenting behaviors (Ishizuka, 2019). On the other hand, although many men are highly involved in daily parenting, they are still relatively shielded from intensive parenting pressures compared to women (Shirani et al., 2012). Shirani and colleagues have argued that to more fully incorporate the lived experiences of fathers, intensive parenting should be expanded to include pressures to financially provide resources for children.

Intensive parenting was originally formulated among White, middle-class mothers, although Hays (1996) expected support across social classes. Both class of origin and class of destination matter for parenting (Streib, 2013). Some early research found that parenting logics such as “concerted cultivation” differed markedly by social class (Lareau, 2003). But several more recent studies have identified class-based similarities in attitudinal adherence to intensive parenting. Elliott and colleagues (2015) found in ethnographic research that low-income Black mothers subscribed to intensive parenting attitudes. Compounding intensive parenting pressures, poor mothers, especially those of color, must also spend considerable time, energy, and resources on “inventive mothering” to meet their children’s basic needs and safety, but this work is often rendered invisible (Randles, 2021). In a nationally representative survey experiment, Ishizuka (2019) found that concerted cultivation parenting behaviors were evaluated positively and similarly by respondents from different social classes and by women and men. Behavioral enactment of intensive parenting still varies by socioeconomic status, presumably because of disparities in access to the substantial resources that are necessary (Bennett et al., 2012).

Intensive parenting has its origins in qualitative scholarship, fostering a long tradition of research (e.g., Collins, 2019; Damaske, 2013; Elliott et al., 2015; Göransson, 2023; Klimor Maman et al., 2023). In the last decade or so, quantitative measurement of intensive parenting has also blossomed. Rooted in Hays’s (1996) work, the Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire (IPAQ) was developed with multiple measures within five domains: parenting as challenging, child-centeredness, stimulation, fulfillment, and gender essentialism (Liss et al., 2013; Mackintosh et al., 2014). The IPAQ was initially tested and validated with a convenience sample of predominantly White mothers, demonstrating validity and reliability. Because there appear to be differences in how it works for other groups by gender and race/ethnicity, more studies with diverse and representative samples are needed (Long et al., 2021).

The original US focus of intensive parenting research has expanded to include other contexts, including the UK, Estonia, and Slovakia (Gauthier et al., 2021), France (Loyal et al., 2017), Israel (Klimor Maman et al., 2023), and Singapore (Göransson, 2023). This expansion is important because both national policies and cultural norms can be expected to shape attitudes toward parenting (Neyer & Andersson, 2008). In related research, Collins (2019) compared middle-class working mothers in qualitative interviews in Germany, Italy, Sweden, and the US, finding that both policies and norms were important for understanding the pressures and social reactions mothers experienced. Gauthier and colleagues (2021) compared three countries using quantitative measures of intensive parenting, finding a mixture of differences and similarities in average intensive parenting attitudes across national contexts. Differences were especially pronounced when examining specific domains of intensive parenting, suggesting that attitudinal profiles within individuals are complex and warrant further attention.

Our study emphasizes the importance in quantitative research of investigating individuals' profiles of intensive parenting attitudes holistically, rather than relying only on population averages. This approach mirrors that often taken by qualitative researchers seeking to understand intensive parenting attitudes and experiences from the lens of the whole individual. Two findings discussed above support this approach: first, the country-level differences that vary by specific intensive parenting domain (Gauthier et al., 2021), and second, the differing reliability of the IPAQ depending on gender and race/ethnicity (Long et al., 2021). Further, age, gender, parenthood status, and socioeconomic status all predict intensive parenting attitudes differently across different domains (Gauthier et al., 2021). Factors such as gender and employment also intersect: Stay-at-home versus working mothers subscribe more strongly to different domains of intensive parenting (Liss et al., 2013). Qualitative research bears out the notion that different profiles of intensive parenting can exist across individuals: Israeli middle-class parents tend to subscribe to one of two

“folk models” of intensive parenting, one focused on child-centeredness and another on stimulation (Klimor Maman et al., 2023).

Two extant quantitative studies have used such a person-centered approach—in contrast to a variable-centered one—to examine profiles of intensive parenting attitudes within individuals. In hierarchical cluster analyses of attitudes about intensive parenting and combining work and mothering, Loyal and colleagues (2017) identified some clusters of French individuals that were internally discordant; in other words, these respondents subscribed to some facets of intensive parenting but not others. They found that socioeconomic status and the age of the mother’s youngest child predicted cluster membership. The presence of internally discordant clusters speaks to the importance of going beyond population averages to identify profiles of intensive parenting attitudes within individuals. Lankes (2022) conducted a latent class analysis among US mothers, identifying predominant profiles combining intensive parenting attitudes (in the domains of parenting satisfaction, fatigue, and gender essentialism) and behaviors. All identified latent classes of individuals were internally discordant. Membership in these latent classes varied significantly by socioeconomic status, age, race/ethnicity, and partnership status. These studies support a person-centered approach allowing for internal discordance in attitudes and domains of intensive parenting.

Parenting in Sweden

In this study we focus on Sweden, arguing that it provides a unique case for investigating the composition, distribution, and sociodemographic correlates of individuals’ intensive parenting attitude profiles. The Swedish state has long provided extensive supports for childrearing, such as lengthy parental leaves with months reserved for both parents, child subsidies, paid leave to care for a sick child, and high-quality low-cost child care (Ferrarini & Duvander, 2010; Viklund & Duvander, 2017). Governmental policies have also focused on encouraging all parents to work for

pay and promoting gender equality (Eriksson, 2019; Evertsson & Duvander, 2011). These policy supports may be important for understanding intensive parenting attitudes in Sweden because, relative to other contexts that have been studied, parents are not being expected to provide as many resources themselves and the burden of parenting is not expected to fall only on mothers.

Beyond policy supports directly related to parenting, Sweden's traditionally low levels of socioeconomic inequality could be quite salient for intensive parenting attitudes. Intensive parenting is theorized to be driven by concerns about an insecure future and the need for children's socioeconomic achievement to smooth the way for their futures (Gauthier & de Jong, 2021; Milkie & Warner, 2014). For example, Villalobos (2014) found that women who perceive more insecurity in their lives more often had attitudes and behaviors that are concordant with intensive parenting. If social safety nets and a relative lack of inequality make that future less uncertain, parenting attitudes may be less intensive.

But the situation is changing in Sweden. Economic and health inequalities are increasing (OECD, 2015), and the shrinking social safety net is bifurcated between those with permanent work contracts and others, as well as between native-born Swedes and others (Parrilla Stoorhöök & Wedtström Kjerfth, 2020; Statistics Sweden, 2023). These rising inequalities could be making intensive parenting more salient in Sweden overall. They could also make intensive parenting unequally attractive for different groups. For example, foreign-born people and those without permanent work contracts might be more compelled to focus on intensive parenting in an attempt to ensure their children's future socioeconomic success. All of these structural dynamics make Sweden a very different policy case from many of the countries that have been studied quantitatively to date.

Alongside these structural factors that likely shape intensive parenting are cultural norms. Sweden is also an outlier with regard to norms around gender and parenting. Among European

countries, Sweden has a high level of consensus in its gender ideology, which—together with other Nordic countries—stands out as being predominantly and consistently egalitarian across a variety of dimensions (Begall et al., 2023). At the same time, though, few fathers choose to take an equal share of parental leave (Duvander & Johansson, 2012; Duvander & Viklund, 2020), and motherhood comes with a wage penalty (Bygren et al., 2021). As a consequence, nearly half of new parenting couples still have gender-traditional divisions of parental leave and income (Lidwall & Voss, 2020). This speaks to the importance of not only policies, but also normative factors, for understanding intensive parenting in Sweden. Indeed, qualitative research has found that work-family policies alleviate much but not all of the parenting guilt experienced by Swedish mothers (Collins, 2021).

Finally, Swedes' levels of both generalized social trust and trust in welfare state institutions are relatively high (Delhey & Newton, 2005; Edlund, 2006). Beyond having policies and institutions in place, trusting state policies and institutions such as schools to care for children, provide them with sufficient opportunities, and prevent extreme inequalities may mean that essential fodder for the growth of intensive parenting attitudes is missing in the Swedish context.

Hypotheses

Swedish Exceptionalism Hypothesis

This discussion motivates the *Swedish exceptionalism hypothesis*, which expects that population-level adherence to intensive parenting attitudes in Sweden will be low to moderate, but not high. See Figure 1 for an articulation and comparison of hypotheses. Looking at profiles of intensive parenting attitudes *within* individuals, Swedes may reject intensive parenting attitudes across the board, or they may present internally discordant profiles adhering to some aspects of intensive parenting and not others. But the Swedish exceptionalism hypothesis expects that most Swedes will not subscribe to all intensive parenting attitudes.

FIGURE 1. SUMMARY OF PREDICTIONS AND FINDINGS ACCORDING TO HYPOTHESIS.

	<u>Swedish exceptionalism hypothesis</u>	<u>International development hypothesis</u>	<u>Findings primarily supported...</u>
Population average	Weak adherence to IP attitudes	Strong adherence to IP attitudes	Mixed result
IP profiles	High % reject IP or internally discordant	High % concordantly moderate to strong IP	Mixed result
Sociodemographic composition	Non-IP profiles higher among...	IP profiles higher among...	
<i>Gender</i>	Women	Women	International development
<i>Age</i>	No difference	Younger	International development
<i>Nativity</i>	Swedish-born	Foreign-born	Swedish exceptionalism
<i>Municipality type</i>	No difference	Urban	International development
<i>Parenthood status</i>	Parents	Parents	International development
<i>Socioeconomic status</i>	Privileged	Privileged	Swedish exceptionalism

Notes: IP=intensive parenting.

This hypothesis further expects stronger adherence to intensive parenting attitudes among certain sociodemographic groups. Because parents and particularly mothers are disproportionately scrutinized for their adherence to dominant parenting norms, the Swedish exceptionalism hypothesis expects women and parents to subscribe more strongly to the dominant (non-intensive parenting) Swedish parenting attitudes. There is no expectation of a relationship with age or residential location (urban versus rural). Swedish-born respondents are expected to have been more exposed to the dominant (non-intensive parenting) Swedish parenting attitudes and be more trusting of Swedish institutions, so should have higher levels of non-intensive parenting than all other migrant groups. And those with privileged socioeconomic status, who are most able to enact

the dominant parenting attitudes and who have the most to gain from an attitude that facilitates combining work and parenting, are more likely to adhere to the dominant (non-intensive parenting) Swedish parenting attitudes.

International Development Hypothesis

An alternative hypothesis, the *international development hypothesis*, regards Sweden not as a unique case but as part of a global system in which hegemonic ideologies often develop across contexts facing similar structural pressures and diffuse within populations and across national borders despite the presence of local normative contexts and policies (Pampel, 2011; Pampel & Hunter, 2012). The trends toward perceived uncertainty and inequality, in Sweden as in many other wealthy contexts, may be fostering the development of intensive parenting attitudes. Exposure to international media may accelerate this process. Swedes are unusually well-connected to the Internet (Kemp, 2021) and devote large amounts of time to consuming social media and online content (Guttmann, 2022). Much of this content is international rather than Swedish-generated, especially in this context where nearly 90% of the population is fluent in English (European Commission, 2012). People tend to look online for information about parenting (Kubb & Foran, 2020), and much of the information Swedes encounter is in English and produced in other contexts. All of these processes may serve to diffuse intensive parenting attitudes, which researchers have documented is predominant in many wealthy countries, including in Europe.

If intensive parenting attitudes have developed in Sweden as in other wealthy contexts, the population should on average show strong adherence. In profiles of intensive parenting attitudes within individuals, there should be a high proportion of the population with concordantly strong or moderate adherence to different domains of intensive parenting. Adherence to intensive parenting should be higher among women and parents, both because they are disproportionately held to the societally dominant parenting attitudes and because mothers may be more likely than other adults

to be exposed to international online content about parenting. The international development hypothesis expects stronger adherence among younger respondents, those in urban areas, and the foreign-born—especially those from wealthy countries—because they are all more likely to engage with international online content that promotes intensive parenting attitudes. As with the Swedish exceptionalism hypothesis, the international development hypothesis expects higher adherence to the dominant parenting attitudes (in this case, intensive parenting) among the socioeconomically privileged, who have more resources to enact the culturally preferred parenting ideal. Findings on the international diffusion of gender egalitarianism further support the notion that international development first occurs among higher-SES people (Pampel, 2011). Using a combination of descriptive and latent class analyses, we assessed these two hypotheses among Swedish adults.

METHOD

Data

This study used data from the second wave of the Swedish Generations and Gender Survey (SGGS), a repeated cross-sectional survey. Administered online with a postal option between March and August of 2021 to adults aged 18-59, the survey focuses on fertility and partnership behaviors in Sweden and other European countries. The 2021 survey included a new module of questions assessing respondents' intensive parenting attitudes, designed to facilitate comparison with findings in other countries. The response rate was 27%, yielding a sample of 8,082. The response rate was low across all assessed subsample characteristics and was lowest for the foreign born. Probability weights were designed to account for nonresponse. After excluding the 2.2% of respondents who were missing data on any included variable, our analysis sample consisted of 7,907 respondents.

Measures

Intensive Parenting Attitudes

The intensive parenting module was drawn from the Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire (IPAQ), a 25-item scale assessing intensive parenting attitudes in five domains. Developed and validated among US mothers and non-mothers, the IPAQ has demonstrated high validity and reliability (Liss et al., 2013). Further validation has been conducted in France, with some differences from the US findings (Loyal et al., 2017). The smaller battery of items included in the SGGS focused on the three IPAQ domains most likely to be intensifying in recent years (Gauthier et al., 2021): *the challenges of parenting*, *child-centered parenting*, and *children's need for stimulation*. Respondents reported whether they strongly agreed, agreed, neither disagreed or agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with six statements; see the left side of Table 1 for item frequencies and standard deviations. The two items with the highest factor loadings for each dimension in previous validation (Liss et al., 2013) were selected. Stronger agreement with each statement represents stronger intensive parenting attitudes. *Challenging*: 1) “Childrearing is a really demanding job,” and “Parents never get a mental break from their children, even when they are physically apart.” *Child-centeredness*: “Children’s needs should come before their parents’,” and “Children should be the center of attention.” *Stimulation*: “Finding the best educational opportunities for children is important as early as preschool,” and “It is important for children to be involved in classes, lessons and activities that engage and stimulate them.” Having just two items per dimension and being limited to just three dimensions of intensive parenting are limitations of the SGGS data. Different dimensions and items may also carry different meanings for different subpopulations (Gauthier et al., 2021). It is also important to consider possible reverse causality: UK findings suggest that women’s attitudes toward gender essentialism in parenting may

influence their employment status, at least in countries where stay-at-home motherhood is common (Borrell-Porta et al., 2023).

Independent Variables

See Table 2 for descriptive information on all analysis variables. SGGS respondents self-reported *gender* as male or female (a more nuanced measure of gender identity was not available in the survey data) and *age* in years. Age was recoded into unweighted quartiles: ages 18-30,

Table 1. *Class-Conditional Response Probabilities from Latent Class Analysis of Intensive Parenting Attitudes.*

Item	Response	Item SD	Sample mean	Strong IP	Moderate IP	Reject IP	Neutral IP	Challenging/ activities
Percentage of cases in class				17%	36%	4%	7%	36%
<u>Challenging dimension</u>								
Parents never get a mental break from their children, even when they are physically apart.								
Strongly disagree	0.83	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.15	0.00	0.01	
			0.10	0.08	0.08	0.19	0.05	0.12
			0.43	0.27	0.45	0.41	0.92	0.40
			0.39	0.37	0.45	0.20	0.03	0.43
			0.06	0.24	0.01	0.05	0.00	0.05
Childrearing is a really demanding job.								
Strongly disagree	0.87	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.20	0.01	0.00	
			0.05	0.02	0.03	0.32	0.03	0.05
			0.23	0.10	0.19	0.28	0.82	0.21
			0.47	0.27	0.59	0.12	0.14	0.55
			0.25	0.59	0.19	0.09	0.00	0.20
<u>Child-centeredness dimension</u>								
Children should be the center of attention.								
Strongly disagree	0.83	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.00	
			0.06	0.01	0.00	0.46	0.03	0.11
			0.35	0.08	0.01	0.15	0.88	0.75
			0.45	0.32	0.90	0.15	0.10	0.14
			0.13	0.59	0.09	0.03	0.00	0.00
Children's needs should come before their parents'.								
Strongly disagree	0.88	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.01	0.01	
			0.06	0.01	0.00	0.35	0.01	0.13
			0.34	0.11	0.21	0.21	0.78	0.53
			0.41	0.26	0.65	0.11	0.17	0.31
			0.17	0.61	0.14	0.13	0.04	0.03
<u>Stimulation dimension</u>								
Finding the best educational opportunities for children is important as early as preschool.								
Strongly disagree	1.09	0.07	0.06	0.03	0.37	0.01	0.09	
			0.23	0.07	0.17	0.34	0.18	0.36
			0.34	0.12	0.42	0.17	0.72	0.32
			0.26	0.25	0.38	0.09	0.08	0.19
			0.10	0.50	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.04
It is important for children to be involved in classes, lessons and activities that engage and stimulate them.								
Strongly disagree	0.72	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.14	0.00	0.00	

Disagree	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.15	0.02	0.00
Neither agree nor disagree	0.09	0.03	0.06	0.22	0.60	0.04
Agree	0.48	0.14	0.58	0.31	0.38	0.57
Strongly agree	0.42	0.83	0.35	0.19	0.00	0.38

Source: Swedish Generations and Gender Survey, 2021.

Notes: N=7907. Analyses are weighted. All items range from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. SD=standard deviation. IP=intensive parenting. Color coding: dark green=highest agreement with IP, light green=higher agreement than average, light orange=higher disagreement than average, dark orange=highest disagreement, dark gray=highest neutrality, light gray=higher neutrality than average.

31-41, 42-50, or 51-59. Based on 2021 statistics on age at first birth in Sweden, the lowest quartile of respondents was below, and the highest three quartiles were at or above, the median age of 31.

Nativity distinguished between Sweden as the respondent's country of birth versus anywhere else.

Respondents' current *municipality type* was coded as a large metropolitan area, medium-sized metropolitan area, or small town/rural area.

Table 2. Means for Independent Variables across Intensive Parenting Latent Classes.

Variable	Sample mean	Strong IP	Moderate IP	Reject IP	Neutral IP	Challenging / activities
% of sample		17%	36%	4%	7%	36%
Female	0.49	0.54	0.51	0.44	0.46	0.46
Age 18-30	0.30	0.33	0.31	0.20	0.23	0.30
Age 31-40	0.28	0.32	0.28	0.25	0.21	0.26
Age 42-50	0.21	0.18	0.20	0.26	0.27	0.23
Age 51-59	0.21	0.18	0.21	0.29	0.29	0.22
Foreign born	0.23	0.38	0.21	0.37	0.19	0.17
Small town/rural area	0.21	0.18	0.21	0.25	0.29	0.21
Midsized metropolitan area	0.38	0.38	0.39	0.35	0.36	0.37
Large metropolitan area	0.41	0.45	0.39	0.40	0.35	0.42
No children	0.44	0.45	0.40	0.43	0.49	0.45
Youngest child age 0-2	0.10	0.14	0.11	0.06	0.04	0.07
Youngest child age 3 to 5	0.07	0.09	0.09	0.07	0.05	0.06
Youngest child age 6 to 10	0.11	0.10	0.11	0.11	0.09	0.11
Youngest child age ≥11	0.28	0.23	0.28	0.33	0.33	0.30
Has ever had children	0.56	0.55	0.60	0.57	0.51	0.55
Parity 1	0.14	0.15	0.15	0.16	0.09	0.12
Parity 2	0.29	0.27	0.30	0.26	0.26	0.29
Parity ≥3	0.14	0.13	0.14	0.15	0.15	0.13
Age at 1st birth: <25	0.13	0.14	0.14	0.11	0.14	0.11
Age at 1st birth: 25-29	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.16	0.18	0.21
Age at 1st birth: 30-34	0.16	0.13	0.17	0.19	0.15	0.17
Age at 1st birth: ≥35	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.11	0.04	0.06
Parent ≥2 yrs postsecondary	0.34	0.28	0.35	0.22	0.30	0.40
Parent <2 yrs postsecondary	0.49	0.43	0.50	0.48	0.56	0.49
Parent education missing	0.17	0.29	0.15	0.30	0.14	0.12
≥2 yrs postsecondary education	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.27	0.38
Employed permanent	0.60	0.53	0.60	0.58	0.61	0.63
Employed non-permanent	0.07	0.09	0.07	0.10	0.07	0.06
Self-employed	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.07
Unemployed	0.05	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.04
Student/trainee	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.11	0.09	0.15
Parental/child care leave	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.02
Other employment status	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.06	0.08	0.04
Lived with 2 parents to age 15	0.79	0.76	0.80	0.76	0.75	0.80
Married	0.36	0.36	0.37	0.37	0.34	0.36

Cohabiting	0.28	0.27	0.28	0.25	0.25	0.30
Living apart together	0.09	0.07	0.09	0.09	0.07	0.10
Unpartnered	0.27	0.30	0.26	0.28	0.34	0.25
No income	0.14	0.17	0.13	0.16	0.15	0.12
1-149999 SEK	0.16	0.19	0.17	0.12	0.13	0.16
150000-29999 SEK	0.15	0.17	0.16	0.18	0.16	0.14
300000-449999 SEK	0.30	0.27	0.32	0.25	0.34	0.30
450000+ SEK	0.24	0.19	0.22	0.28	0.23	0.29
Financial hardship: great difficulty	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.01
Financial hardship: difficulty	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.02
Financial hardship: some difficulty	0.10	0.13	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.08
Financial hardship: fairly easily	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.18	0.20	0.24
Financial hardship: easily	0.32	0.27	0.35	0.33	0.32	0.30
Financial hardship: very easily	0.30	0.29	0.27	0.32	0.31	0.34

Source: Swedish Generations and Gender Survey, 2021.

Notes: N=7907. Analyses are weighted. IP=intensive parenting. Color coding: dark green=highest level of independent variable, light green=higher than average, light orange=lower than average, dark orange=lowest level.

Social class was operationalized through one measure of class background and two of current socioeconomic status (SES). *Parents' educational attainment*, drawn from Swedish registers, captured whether either the respondent's mother or father had received at least two years of postsecondary education. Because this information was missing systematically depending on respondent's country of origin and parents' dates of death, we included an indicator for missing information. Respondents' *educational attainment*, also drawn from register data, was coded as at least two years of postsecondary education versus less. Respondents' self-reported *employment status* was measured as: employed with a permanent contract, employed with a non-permanent contract, self-employed, unemployed, student or trainee, on parental or child care leave, or other.

The main measure of *parenthood status* used in the analyses was the age of the respondent's youngest child. Response categories were: respondent has no children or age 0-2, 3-5, 6-10, or 11 or older. Alternative measures used in some analyses included: (1) an indicator of ever having had children versus not, (2) parity (coded as ever having had 0, 1, 2, or 3 or more children), and (3) age at birth of first child (coded as no children or having had one's first child under age 25, 25-29, 30-34, or 35 or older). A supplemental analysis interacted gender with the indicator of ever having had children.

Auxiliary Variables

Several other variables were included in descriptive but not multivariate analyses because of a consistent lack of significance (for the first two variables below) or similarity to already included variables (for the last two variables). *Family structure of origin* measured whether or not the respondent lived with both parents until age 15. Current *relationship status* was coded as married, cohabiting, living apart together (i.e., partnered but not married or cohabiting), or unpartnered. Respondents' personal *income* was captured from Swedish register data rather than self-reports. Respondents' 2019 personal gross income from job and/or business was categorized as: no income,

1-149,999 SEK, 150,000-299,999 SEK, 300,000-449,999 SEK, or $\geq 450,000$ SEK. A self-reported measure of *financial hardship* recorded responses to how they “make ends meet”: with great difficulty, with difficulty, with some difficulty, fairly easily, easily, or very easily.

Analyses

Preliminary descriptive analyses examined the intensive parenthood survey items, their reliability as a single scale, and a factor analysis identifying potential subscales. Latent class analysis (LCA) was then conducted to identify predominant profiles of intensive parenting attitudes within individuals in the population. LCA takes a structural equation modeling approach, using a set of observed indicators to identify a categorical latent trait that it assumes accounts for associations between the observed variables (Collins & Lanza, 2013). We estimated LCA models using the *dolca* package in Stata (Lanza et al., 2015), then estimated predictors of the latent classes through a two-step approach. In using fit statistics to choose the best-fitting number of latent classes, we favored the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) because it rewards parsimonious models more than other fit statistics.

Each case was assigned a probability of membership in each latent class, and we assigned the class with the highest probability of membership to each individual. Item response probabilities and population shares for each latent class were calculated. Bivariate analyses identified relationships between these intensive parenthood latent classes and independent variables. In multinomial logistic regressions, we predicted the probability of membership in each latent class on the basis of the full set of independent variables. All analyses included probability weights to make findings representative of Swedish adults aged 18-59. Although significant findings at the $p < 0.10$ level are indicated in the tables, in the text we only discuss findings that are significant at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Intensive Parenting Measures

On average, the Swedish respondents expressed weak to moderate levels of agreement with the challenging dimension of intensive parenthood (see Table 1, first column). More than 70% agreed or strongly agreed that “childrearing is a really demanding job,” but slightly fewer than half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “parents never get a mental break from their children, even when they are physically apart.” Levels of consensus about parenting being challenging, as indicated by standard deviations, were fairly high. Further supporting this point, few respondents (6% and 12%, respectively) disagreed or strongly disagreed with these statements. Similar levels of agreement and consensus were found for the child-centeredness dimension of intensive parenting. For both survey items (children as the center of attention and their needs coming first), 58% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, slightly more than one third were neutral, and 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The stimulation dimension incited more polarized responses (as in the French adaptation of the IPAQ, where the stimulation dimension was similarly less cohesive than the challenging and child-centeredness domains [Loyal et al., 2017]). The item on the importance of finding “the best educational opportunities ... as early as preschool” generated higher levels of disagreement and lower levels of agreement. Roughly one third of the sample disagreed or strongly disagreed, another third was neutral, and another third agreed or strongly agreed. The standard deviation was correspondingly larger. In contrast, the item on the importance of “classes, lessons, and activities that engage and stimulate” children provoked the most positive and unified response of all the intensive parenting questions. 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, with almost no disagreement reported and a high level of consensus.

With the exception of this activities measure that reached 42% strong agreement, none of the intensive parenting items received strong agreement from more than a quarter of the sample, and many were substantially lower. In general, then, by examining agreement and strong agreement we concluded: (1) that these three intensive parenting domains received weak to moderate support from Swedish adults on average, and (2) that intensive parenting attitudes were discordant, with Swedes endorsing some items much more than others. The implications of this finding for our hypotheses are therefore unclear.

Supplemental analyses (not shown) revealed that bivariate correlations among these six items were weak or very weak, with only the correlation (0.44) between the child-centeredness items exceeding 0.26. The six items had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.57, suggesting that constructing a single scale should be approached with caution (Zeller, 2005). We further conducted a factor analysis. A two-factor solution fit best, with the challenging items loading on one factor and the child-centeredness items loading on another, but with a poor fit for the stimulation items. But reliability was low for both subscales (Cronbach's alpha=0.54 and 0.42, respectively), which may be due in part to having three items per subscale.

Others have found that population-level averages of intensive parenting measures obscured considerable variation across individuals in profiles of intensive parenting (Lankes, 2022; Loyal et al., 2017). People can subscribe to some aspects of intensive parenting but not others, for example. A latent class analysis approach can identify the predominant profiles of intensive parenting attitudes among Swedes, regardless of whether they are consistent or inconsistent within or across dimensions.

Latent Class Analyses

We estimated solutions from two to eight latent classes, comparing their goodness of fit based on multiple fit statistics and examining the sizes of very small classes, which can cause statistical

power issues in further analyses. The five-class solution emerged as the best-fitting class that did not result in a very small latent class containing 3% or less of the sample. An alternative latent class analysis specification that collapsed small response categories for the intensive parenting survey items resulted in similar findings. Another alternative specification split the latent class analyses by parenthood status (has ever had children). Although proportions in each class differed, similar types of latent classes emerged in this specification. Restricting the latent class analysis of nonparents to those under age 42 (who might have future children) did not result in substantively different findings compared to including all nonparents.

The five-class solution contained latent classes that we have dubbed strong intensive parenting, moderate intensive parenting, reject intensive parenting, neutral intensive parenting, and challenging/activities. Information on the attitudinal profiles and sociodemographic composition of each latent class follows. Because the sample was split roughly in half between concordant latent classes that adhered strongly or moderately to intensive parenting attitudes and either discordant latent classes or those that did not support intensive parenting attitudes, these findings provide partial support for both the Swedish exceptionalism and international development hypotheses.

First, the *strong intensive parenting* (“strong IP”) class comprised 17% of the sample. This class was distinguished by comparatively high levels of strong agreement with each of the six items (see Table 1). Strong agreement was twice as high or more than in any other latent class. For example, 59% of “strong IP” respondents strongly agreed that childrearing is a really demanding job, compared to 0-20% of respondents from other latent classes. Table 2 shows that the “strong IP” class was disproportionately composed of female, younger respondents lacking permanent employment. They more often had young children, struggled financially, and lived in large metropolitan areas. 38% of “strong IP” respondents were foreign born, compared to 23% of the overall sample.

Second, the *moderate intensive parenting* (“moderate IP”) class was tied for the largest in the sample, at 36%. For all items, this class was characterized by low levels of disagreement and the highest levels of agreement (but not strong agreement) of all classes; see Table 1. Table 2 shows that besides being more likely to have children, those in the “moderate IP” class rarely deviated much from the sample mean. They were sociodemographically distinct from the “strong IP” class.

Third, the *reject intensive parenting* (“reject IP”) class, comprising just 4% of the sample, had the relatively highest levels of disagreement and strong disagreement on all six measures (see Table 1). The percentage of respondents in this class who disagreed or strongly disagreed with each item was substantially higher than the percentage who agreed or strongly agreed, with the exception of the activities measure. Table 2 reveals its distinct sociodemographic profile. 56% were men, and most were older with older children and older ages at first birth. They disproportionately came from small towns or rural areas and were more likely than other groups to have non-permanent employment. Like the “strong IP” class, the “reject IP” class had a high proportion of foreign-born respondents, at 37%.

Fourth, the *neutral intensive parenting* (“neutral IP”) class was again small at 7% of the sample. A majority of these respondents answered “neither agree nor disagree” on each item. This neutrality on the attitudinal items was the most strikingly consistent pattern among the latent classes in Table 1. It is difficult to draw conclusions from use of the neutral response option because it can either reflect substantive neutrality regarding the attitude being measured, or it can represent a pattern of nonsubstantive “satisficing” by frequently choosing the middle response option regardless of the question (Truebner, 2021). Use of the neutral response option has been increasing over time and is often related to older age and lower education (Truebner, 2021). In our analysis, Table 2 shows that “neutral IP” respondents were more often male, older, Swedish-born,

unpartnered, and either childless or had 3 or more children, had lower education and came from lower-SES backgrounds, and came from small towns or rural areas.

Fifth, a second large latent class emerged that subscribed to some aspects of intensive parenting but not others. The *challenging/activities* class (36% of the sample) was overrepresented in its agreement (but not strong agreement) with three of the six intensive parenting items: the two measures of the challenging dimension and the stimulation measure about children's involvement in lessons and activities (see Table 1). In contrast, a majority of "challenging/activities" respondents took a neutral position on the two child-centeredness measures, and most did not agree with the educational opportunities measure. This resulted in a profile of discordant adherence to intensive parenting attitudes.

Respondents in the "challenging/activities" latent class had greater socioeconomic privilege than any other classes, both in terms of socioeconomic background and current SES (educational attainment, permanent employment, personal income, and financial hardship; see Table 2). Members of the "challenging/activities" class were the most likely of any class to be Swedish born. They were disproportionately male, older, cohabiting or living apart together, and had older children.

Multivariate Analyses

Table 3 reports results from multinomial logit models that compared each latent class to the base outcome of the "strong intensive parenting" class. Many of the results support the hypothesis of international development of intensive parenting attitudes among younger, foreign-born, urban mothers. Gender structured the probabilities of latent class membership as expected by this hypothesis. Female respondents were 32% less likely than men to belong to the "reject IP" class compared to "strong IP." (Percentages reported from the multinomial logit models are based on

Table 3. Coefficients from Multinomial Logit Models Predicting Intensive Parenting Latent Classes (Base Outcome=Strong IP, 20%).

Variable	Moderate IP		Reject IP		Neutral IP		Challenging/activities	
% of sample	36%		4%		7%		36%	
Female	-0.12	(0.08)	-0.38 *	(0.15)	-0.20	(0.13)	-0.28 **	(0.08)
Age (≤30)								
31-40	0.01	(0.13)	0.53 *	(0.26)	0.42 *	(0.20)	0.17	(0.13)
42-50	0.21	(0.16)	1.12 **	(0.30)	1.18 **	(0.23)	0.53 **	(0.15)
51-59	0.26	(0.17)	1.17 **	(0.33)	1.11 **	(0.24)	0.45 **	(0.17)
Foreign born	-0.53 **	(0.17)	-0.24	(0.31)	-0.75 *	(0.30)	-0.86 **	(0.17)
Municipality type (small town/rural)								
Midsized metro area	-0.11	(0.11)	-0.41 *	(0.20)	-0.45 **	(0.16)	-0.17	(0.11)
Large metro area	-0.21 +	(0.11)	-0.45 *	(0.20)	-0.59 **	(0.16)	-0.18	(0.11)
Age of youngest child (none)								
0-2 years old	0.00	(0.16)	-0.91 **	(0.32)	-1.37 **	(0.27)	-0.70 **	(0.16)
3-5 years old	0.15	(0.17)	-0.46	(0.33)	-0.77 **	(0.26)	-0.46 **	(0.17)
6-10 years old	0.27 +	(0.16)	-0.36	(0.28)	-0.69 **	(0.23)	-0.07	(0.15)
≥11 years old	0.22	(0.14)	-0.31	(0.24)	-0.53 **	(0.20)	0.03	(0.14)
Parental education (<2 yrs postsecondary)								
≥2 yrs postsecondary	0.17 +	(0.09)	-0.16	(0.17)	0.12	(0.14)	0.31 **	(0.09)
Parent education missing	-0.35 +	(0.20)	0.12	(0.34)	-0.22	(0.34)	-0.25	(0.20)
≥2 yrs postsecondary	0.15	(0.09)	0.17	(0.17)	-0.07	(0.14)	0.31 **	(0.09)
Employment status (permanent contract)								
Non-permanent contract	-0.13	(0.15)	0.19	(0.28)	-0.22	(0.25)	-0.29 +	(0.16)
Self-employed	-0.19	(0.17)	0.06	(0.29)	0.03	(0.24)	-0.01	(0.17)
Unemployed	-0.07	(0.18)	-0.31	(0.36)	-0.14	(0.28)	-0.51 **	(0.19)
Student/trainee	0.04	(0.15)	0.08	(0.29)	-0.45 +	(0.25)	-0.05	(0.15)
Parental/child care leave	-0.24	(0.25)	-0.24	(0.58)	-1.36 +	(0.78)	-0.26	(0.28)
Other employment status	-0.23	(0.20)	0.00	(0.36)	0.13	(0.27)	-0.40 +	(0.21)
Constant	0.92 **	(0.15)	-1.31 **	(0.29)	-0.38 +	(0.22)	1.02 **	(0.15)

Source: Swedish Generations and Gender Survey, 2021.

Notes: N=7907. Analyses are weighted. IP=intensive parenting. Standard errors and reference categories in parentheses. + p<0.10, * p<0.05, **p<0.10.

relative risk ratios derived from converting coefficients in Table 3. Here, $\exp[-0.38]=0.68$ and $1-0.68=0.32$.) The equivalent likelihood was 24% for the “challenging/activities” class compared to “strong IP.” In other words, the two latent classes that concordantly supported all measured aspects of intensive parenting were predominantly populated by women.

Age also structured latent class membership as expected by the international development hypothesis. Compared to respondents aged 30 or younger, those in the two oldest categories (ages 42-59) were significantly more likely to belong in the “reject IP,” “neutral IP,” and “challenging/activities” classes relative to “strong IP.” For example, compared to the youngest respondents, older respondents were more than 200% more likely to belong to the “reject IP” class relative to “strong IP.” These findings support the notion of intensive parenting ideologies being more prevalent among younger people.

Further, results for municipality type supported the international development hypothesis. Relative to “strong IP,” respondents from midsized and large metropolitan areas were significantly less likely to belong to the “reject IP” and “neutral IP” classes. This means that membership in classes supporting intensive parenting ideologies was higher in urban areas.

Parenthood status was also associated with intensive parenting classes as expected in the international development hypothesis. Parents with young children, in particular, were significantly more likely than nonparents to belong to the “strong IP” class relative to “reject IP” (148% more likely), “neutral IP” (294% more likely), and “challenging/activities” (101% more likely). Parents with preschool-aged children were significantly less likely to belong to “neutral IP” or “challenging/activities” relative to “strong IP,” and those with older children were less likely to belong to “neutral IP.” In other words, parents in the most intensive stages of their parenting careers were more likely than others to subscribe to intensive parenting.

We replaced age of youngest child with three alternative parenthood measures in supplemental analyses (not shown). Compared to those who had never had a child, parents were 38%, 55%, and 24% less likely to belong to the “reject IP,” “neutral IP,” and “challenging/activities” classes, respectively, relative to the “strong IP class.” This relationship held across parities for “neutral IP,” while it was only significant for two parity categories for “reject IP” and “challenging/activities.” Regarding age at first birth, all categories of parents

were significantly less likely to be in the “neutral IP” class relative to “strong IP.” Belonging to the “reject IP” and “challenging/activities” classes was less likely at younger ages at first birth compared to not being a parent. Supplemental analyses (not shown) interacted gender with the dichotomous measure of parental status. This interaction was not significant, showing that parental status operated similarly on latent class membership across genders. In other words, both women and parents were more likely to belong to classes with strong intensive parenting attitudes, but being a mother did not further strengthen those relationships.

Taken together, the multivariate findings supported the international development hypothesis by showing that membership in latent classes concordantly adhering to intensive parenting attitudes was often more prevalent among women, younger people, those in urban areas, and parents of young children.

The multivariate findings with respect to socioeconomic status were unexpected within the international development hypothesis, instead partially supporting the Swedish exceptionalism hypothesis. Rather than the classes with stronger support for intensive parenting being more socioeconomically privileged, it was the “challenging/activities” class, with its support of only some aspects of intensive parenting, to which socioeconomically privileged respondents disproportionately belonged. Either having at least two years of postsecondary education of one’s own, or having a parent with postsecondary education, predicted a 36% higher likelihood of belonging to the “challenging/activities” class (relative to “strong IP”) compared to having less education. Compared to unemployment, permanent employment was also associated with a higher likelihood of belonging to the “challenging/activities” class relative to “strong IP.” Other socioeconomic measures were not statistically significant. Supplemental analyses (not shown) that replaced educational attainment and employment status with first personal income, then financial hardship, supported our findings. Those with higher incomes and those with less financial hardship had

significantly higher odds of membership in the “challenging/activities” class. Additional analyses examined an interaction between age and education and did not find support for the relationship between SES and intensive parenting profiles varying by age.

Finally, nativity findings supported the Swedish exceptionalism hypothesis more than international development. Foreign-born respondents, compared to the Swedish-born, were significantly more likely to belong to the “strong IP” class relative to the “moderate IP,” “neutral IP,” and “challenging/activities” classes. Being Swedish-born predicted weaker intensive parenting attitudes and membership in the “challenging/activities” class. Interestingly, there was no significant difference by nativity when comparing “reject IP” to “strong IP.”

DISCUSSION

Intensive parenting attitudes, which promotes extensive devotion of resources such as time, money, and emotional labor when parenting, have spread in many wealthy countries. Sweden, with its long history of state intervention to shift the burdens of parenting away from individuals and equalize women’s and men’s work-life balance, is interesting to study as a potential exception. Given longstanding norms and policies around parenting and given trust in institutions, has intensive parenting attitudes penetrated into Swedish adults’ attitudes? We articulated competing hypotheses. The international development hypothesis posits that intensive parenting is developing in Sweden as in other contexts experiencing uncertainties, inequalities, and pressures to follow expert parenting guidance. The Swedish exceptionalism hypothesis instead suggests an alternative view of parenting as less intensive, strongly rooted in Swedish culture and supported by Swedish institutions and policies.

We analyzed nationally representative 2021 Swedish Generations and Gender Survey data that measured three domains of intensive parenting based on internationally validated

scales. On average we found weak to moderate agreement with intensive parenting and fairly high consensus for most items, but endorsement of intensive parenting was discordant, with some items much more highly endorsed than others. We also found that these averages concealed important individual-level variation. In latent class analyses identifying predominant profiles of intensive parenting attitudes within individuals, about half the sample belonged to classes that moderately or strongly supported intensive parenting across the board. Only nativity distinguished these classes, with the foreign-born overrepresented in strong intensive parenting. Importantly, one third of the sample were in a latent class subscribing to the challenging domain of intensive parenting but not the child-centeredness domain, and to the importance of lessons and activities but not early educational opportunities. 89% of participants belonged to latent classes that at least partially endorsed intensive parenting. Just 11% of respondents were in classes that rejected or were neutral towards intensive parenting attitudes.

The findings supported the hypothesis that intensive parenting attitudes are developing in Sweden among younger people, women, the foreign-born, urban dwellers, and parents of young children. However, the (so far) uniquely Swedish “challenging/activities” profile was more prevalent among the socioeconomically privileged, the Swedish-born, men, and adults in their forties and fifties—in other words, subpopulations with disproportionate power and influence in Swedish society. In these groups, the Swedish exceptionalism hypothesis was supported. Our results provide suggestive evidence for a hybrid of the two hypotheses representing competing parenting ideologies in contemporary Sweden. In this hybrid model, intensive parenting attitudes are developing among those less supported by and trusting of Swedish institutions and bumping up against an existing alternative parenting attitudes held by culturally privileged, established groups that adheres to some aspects of intensive parenting but not others. Especially because these differing ideologies mapped onto salient social dividing

lines such as Swedish- versus foreign-born and urban versus rural, possibilities arise for cultural tensions around parenting norms.

Another interesting tension is suggested by our findings. Intensive parenting was originally documented among racially and class-privileged mothers and acknowledged as a strategy for protecting and perpetuating those privileges in the next generation (Hays, 1996). Yet in Sweden, cultural elites disproportionately subscribed to an alternative parenting attitudes, and intensive parenting was more prevalent among non-class elites. If these attitudes translate into behaviors, and if children benefit more from a more universally intensive parenting approach (which may not be the case), then this could result in narrowing of class divides in the next generation.

Yet structural pressures in contemporary Sweden are moving in the direction of potentially greater inequalities in the future (Robling & Pareliussen, 2017). The educational system is becoming increasingly segregated by social class and ethnicity (Böhlmark et al., 2016; Dovemark et al., 2018), the welfare state is contracting (Statistics Sweden, 2023), and dualization of social benefits is rising, with one track for the permanently employed and another for the rest (McKay et al., 2012). In other words, the generous interventions of the Swedish state to shift the burden of parenting off individuals are now disproportionately accessible to socioeconomically privileged, Swedish-born, older populations. Indeed, it is these groups who subscribed less to centering children's needs above all and actively seeking out educational opportunities starting early in life. Other groups, who have disproportionately less access to state benefits for parents, appear to be responding by subscribing more heavily to all measured aspects of intensive parenting. When state support withdraws, individuals must step in to fill the gap—and when this withdrawal process is unequal, there may be important implications for inequalities that have not yet been documented in other contexts. Further qualitative research fleshing out the everyday experience of intensive parenting and quantitative research

following Swedish adults' intensive parenting attitudes into the future can shed more light on how societal shifts in state support for parents may track with individuals' commitments to investing massive resources in intensive parenting.

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Acknowledgments

This study was supported by FORTE: Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare grant 2022-00490. We thank Anna-Karin Nylin and members of the Stockholm University Demography Unit for helpful feedback.

Stockholm Research Reports in Demography
Stockholm University,
106 91 Stockholm,
Sweden
www.su.se | info@su.se | ISSN 2002-617X



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